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(54) **Spoonable non-dairy creams**

(57) The invention is concerned with spoonable, water-continuous non-dairy creams (NDC) with 10-50 wt.% of fat, 0.01-5 wt.% of thickeners and 0.05-2 wt.% of emul-

sifiers. The creams also contain 0.1-3 wt.% of a multivalent metal salt. These NDC's are stable and spoonable and display preferably Stevens values of 10-500 g.

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Description

Spoonable non-dairy creams are well known in the prior art. They are often used in desserts or with cakes. The requirements that spoonable creams should fulfil at 5°C are described in our EP 483,896-B-1. These requirements are:

- 1) the creams should have an extrapolated yield value of more than 50 Pa, extrapolated from shear rates of 100-300 S⁻¹ (Bingham);
- 2) the creams should have a Bingham viscosity of less than 500 mPa.s between shear rates of 100-300 S⁻¹;
- 3) the creams should display failure to stress at a strain of less than 0.5 Radians.

The methods for measuring G' and G'' are disclosed in our European patent application EP 540,085.

Furthermore, the creams should be stable, i.e. no separation should occur when storing these creams over a relatively long period. It should be noted that failure to stress is defined as that point in the strain curve of an emulsion wherein the storage modulus (G') equals the loss modulus (G''). Although the above-mentioned non-dairy creams are known to be spoonable, the spoonability of these creams is still a problem when using low fat levels (15-25 wt.%).

It is, however, for the purpose of obtaining more healthier products, i.e. products containing low fat, that attempts have been made to produce a low-fat equivalent of the above-mentioned spoonable non-dairy creams.

Another purpose of our new invention resides in the ability to incorporate fruit puree, a flavour paste, a concentrated liquid flavour, a liqueur, spices or mixtures thereof into a spoonable, low-fat non-dairy cream without the loss of spoonable rheology.

We have found a solution to the problems mentioned above. Therefore, our invention is concerned in the first place with a water-continuous, spoonable non-dairy cream (NDC) having 10-50 wt.% of fat, 0.05-2 wt.% of emulsifier(s) and 0.01-5 wt.% of thickener, which non-dairy cream displays at 5°C :

- 1) an extrapolated yield value of more than 50 Pa, extrapolated from shear rates of 100-300 S⁻¹ (Bingham), preferably 70-400 Pa;
- 2) a Bingham viscosity of less than 500 mPa.s between shear rates of 100-300 S⁻¹, preferably 35-250 mPa.s;
- 3) failure to stress at a strain of less than 0.5 Radians, preferably 0.005-0.25,

the non-dairy cream also containing 0.1-3 wt.% of a food-acceptable salt derived from a multivalent metal or alkaline earth metal.

These non-dairy creams are also stable, the term stable being defined as : the cream can be stored for at least 14 days at a temperature of 1-15°C without the consumer noticing any chemical and/or physical changes.

It should be noted that whippable non-dairy creams having a low fat content are disclosed in EP 455,288-B-1. However, nothing is disclosed about a spoonable cream containing a multivalent metal salt. In US 5,290,581 we have disclosed that the whippability of a non-dairy cream based on liquid oils could be improved by the addition of a small amount of a multivalent metal salt.

Suitable spoonable NDC's display a firmness, measured as Stevens value, of 10-500 g. Stevens value can be measured with an LFRA-Stevens texture analyzer, using a cylindrical measuring rod having a diameter of 2.5 cm, a height of 3.5 cm and a weight of 20.9 g and 0.4 mm penetration depth.

The multivalent metal salts can be any salt of the divalent, trivalent or quadrivalent metal or alkali metal that is food-acceptable and can be derived from Mg, Ca, Al, Mn or Fe. Preferred salts are CaCl₂, MgCl₂, MnCl₂, FeCl₂ and FeCl₃. In general, the amount of salt is 0.1-3.0 wt.%, preferably 0.5-1.5 wt.%, based on the NDC.

The fats that can be used in our NDC's are all vegetable fats. Preferred fats are, however, palm kernel oil, soybean oil, rapeseed oil, coconut oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil and/or fully or partially hardened fractions thereof. The fat compositions can also contain butterfat; in general, 0-40 wt.%, preferably 20-30 wt.% of the total fat can consist of butterfat.

The most preferred fat mixtures consist of a mixture of sunflower oil and hardened soybean oil, preferably in a weight ratio of 3-5 sunflower oil to 1 partially hardened soybean oil, and of a mixture of hardened palm kernel oil, coconut oil and butterfat, preferably in a weight ratio of 1-3 palmkernel oil to 1-3 coconut oil to 1 butterfat.

It is preferred that our non-dairy creams also contain one or more of the components selected from : fruit puree (normally containing up to 90 wt.% of water), flavour paste, concentrated liquid flavour, liqueurs and spices, the total amount thereof being 0.5-30 wt.%, preferably 1-15 wt.%.

In order to obtain stable, spoonable NDC's, it is important to use an emulsifier. This emulsifier system may consist of any kind of known emulsifier, but preferably polyglycerol esters, Lactodan (a Grindsted product), lecithins and/or

monoglycerides are used. These emulsifiers can be split up into two groups : (1) stabilising emulsifiers, such as saturated polyglycerol esters or saturated monoglycerides and (2) destabilising emulsifiers, such as unsaturated polyglycerol esters, unsaturated monoglycerides and lecithins. It is preferred that our NDC's contain at least one component of each of these two groups of emulsifiers.

If a lecithin is used, the amount of lecithin present is less than 0.35 wt.%. If a saturated monoglyceride is used, we prefer to use a saturated C₁₆ or C₁₈ fatty acid monoglyceride in an amount of less than 0.25 wt.%. If an unsaturated emulsifier is used, we prefer to use an unsaturated monoglyceride from a C_{18:1} fatty acid.

The emulsifiers are present in amounts of 0.05-2.0 wt.%, preferably 0.1-0.8 wt. %.

Thickeners are also present in our NDC compositions. Although all known types of thickeners can be used, e.g. locust bean gum, guar gum, alginate, carrageenan, microcrystalline cellulose, we prefer to use guar gum. The amount of thickener is normally between 0.01 and 5 wt.%, preferably 0.01-0.5 wt. %.

The taste of NDC is rather bland. In order to improve the taste and to give it a dairy impression, 1-10 wt.%, preferably 5-8 wt.% of a milk protein source such as skimmed milk powder, sodium caseinate, a whey powder concentrate or, preferably, buttermilk powder (BMP) can be added to the water phase of the NDC. The presence of these amounts of buttermilk powder in the NDC's does not influence the other, required properties of our NDC's in an unacceptable way.

The invention is further concerned with a process for the production of spoonable, stable NDC's. This process comprises the following steps :

- making a premix of the fats, emulsifier, thickener, multivalent metal salt or alkaline earth metal salt and water and optionally buttermilk powder;
- heating the premix to 70-90°C;
- sterilizing the heated premix by UHT treatment, i.e. by introducing steam of 130-160°C for 1-30 seconds;
- cooling the sterilized premix to 40-60°C;
- homogenizing the cooled premix under pressure, either in a single stage or in a multi-stage process. Pressures that can be applied range from 50-250 bar, preferably 65-225 bar;
- cooling the homogenized mixture to 25-40°C;
- filling a container, e.g. a tetrapack, with the cooled, homogenized, spoonable NDC at 25-40°C.

If a fruit puree, flavour paste, concentrated liquid flavour, a liqueur or spice is used, this component is incorporated into the premix. The water content of these additives is considered to be part of the water phase.

The filled containers should be further cooled to 5°C in the warehouse.

In this way NDC's are obtained that are spoonable and stable for relatively long periods of time.

EXAMPLE I

A premix was made of the following composition :

	amount in wt. %
Hardened palmkernel oil	11.2
Coconut oil	10.3
Butter	2.0
Buttermilk powder	7.9
Thickeners	0.3
Calcium chloride dihydrate	0.15
Emulsifiers	0.35
Beta-carotene (2%)	0.01
Water	balance to 100%

The premix was treated by a standard UHT process, homogenised at 65 bar, collected at 26°C, and stored at 5°C.

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The rheological behaviour after 5 weeks' storage was as follows :

Yield stress (extrapolated from 100-300 S ⁻¹) :	101 Pa
Bingham viscosity (100-300 S ⁻¹)	232 mPa.s
Failure to stress	0.059 rad

EXAMPLE II

A premix was made of the following composition :

	amount in wt. %
Hardened palmkernel oil	11.2
Coconut oil	10.3
Butter	2.0
Buttermilk powder	7.9
Thickeners	0.3
Calcium chloride dihydrate	1.0
Emulsifiers	0.35
Beta-carotene (2%)	0.01
Water	balance to 100%

The premix was treated by a standard UHT process, homogenised at 65 bar, collected at 26°C, and stored at 5°C. The rheological behaviour after 5 weeks' storage was as follows :

Yield stress (extrapolated from 100-300 S ⁻¹) :	82 Pa
Bingham viscosity (100-300 S ⁻¹)	222 mPa.s
Failure to stress	0.046 rad

EXAMPLES III-V

The procedure of Example I was repeated (however, the premix was collected at 24°C). The recipes of the Table below were applied :

Example	III	IV	V
Hardened palm kernel oil	10.69	11.24	11.25
Coconut oil	9.79	10.31	10.31
Butter	1.9	2.0	2.0
Buttermilk powder	7.51	7.91	7.91
Thickener	0.3	0.3	0.3
Emulsifiers	0.34	0.35	0.35
Calcium chloride dihydrate	0.14	0.10	0.10
Banana puree	1.0		
Coconut puree	1.0		
Pineapple puree	1.0		
Mango puree	1.0		
Papaya puree	1.0		
Hazelnut creme paste		0.165	
Butterscotch paste			2.5
Vanilla essence			0.1
White chocolate pronto		1.0	
Water to	100%	100%	100%

The rheological properties of the products were measured.

The results are given below :

Example	III	IV	V
Sample storage time (weeks)	7	2	2
Yield stress (Pa)	133	273	315
Bingham viscosity (mPa.s)	85	49	43
Failure to stress (rad)	0.027	0.014	0.009

Claims

1. A water-continuous, spoonable non-dairy cream (NDC) having 10-50 wt.% of fat, 0.05-2 wt.% of emulsifier(s) and 0.01-5 wt.% of thickener, which non-dairy cream displays at 5°C :

1) an extrapolated yield value of more than 50 Pa, extrapolated from shear rates of 100-300 S⁻¹ (Bingham);

2) a Bingham viscosity of less than 500 mPa.s between shear rates of 100-300 S⁻¹;

3) failure to stress at a strain of less than 0.5 Radians,
the non-dairy cream also containing 0.1-3 wt.% of a food-acceptable salt derived from a multivalent metal or alkaline earth metal.

2. NDC according to Claim 1, wherein the NDC displays a Stevens value of 10-500 g.

3. NDC according to Claims 1-2, wherein the fat is a saturated and/or unsaturated, vegetable fat.

4. NDC according to Claim 4, wherein the fat is at least one of the group consisting of palm kernel oil, soybean oil, rapeseed oil, coconut oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil, butterfat or fully or partially hardened fractions thereof.

5. NDC according to Claim 4, wherein the fat is a mixture of hardened palm kernel oil, coconut oil and butterfat.

6. NDC according to Claim 1, wherein the NDC also contains 0.5-30 wt.% of a fruit puree, one or more flavour pastes, one or more concentrated liquid flavours, one or more liqueurs, one or more spices or mixtures thereof.

7. NDC according to Claim 1, wherein the fat content is 15-25 wt.%.

8. NDC according to Claim 1, wherein the emulsifier is a saturated monoglycerol ester.

9. NDC according to Claim 1, wherein the emulsifier is present in an amount of 0.1-0.8 wt.%.

10. NDC according to Claim 1, wherein the thickener is guar gum.

11. NDC according to Claim 1, wherein the amount of thickener is 0.01-0.5 wt.%.

12. NDC according to Claim 1, wherein also 1-10 wt.% of a milk protein source, preferably buttermilk powder, is present.

13. Process for the preparation of the spoonable NDC according to Claim 1, comprising the steps of

- making a premix of fats, emulsifier, thickener, multivalent metal salt or alkaline earth metal salt and water and optionally buttermilk powder;
- heating the premix to 70-90°C;
- sterilizing the heated premix by injection of steam of 130-160°C for 1-30 seconds;
- cooling the sterilized premix to 40-60°C;

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- homogenizing the cooled premix under pressure;
- cooling the homogenized mixture to 25-40°C;
- 5 - filling a container with the cooled, homogenized, spoonable NDC at 25-40°C.

14. Process according to Claim 13, wherein the pressure, applied in the homogenisation step, is 50-250 bar.

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